



200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT (MSA)

Fact
Sheet

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What is the Maryland School Assessment (MSA)?

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is a statewide test of reading and mathematics achievement which measures basic as well as higher level skills. The MSA meets the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires each state to test how well its students read and do math. In the future, science tests will be added at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Which students take the MSA?

Students in grades 3 through 8 take the MSA in reading and mathematics each year in March. Two tests are also required at the high school level to measure reading and mathematics. Students enrolled in the second year of high school English take the English 2 assessment, and students who take the high school geometry course take a geometry assessment after they complete the course (this includes middle school students who take the high school level geometry course). The English 2 test is used as the measure for reading and the geometry test is used as the measure for mathematics.

All students, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency, are included in testing. Most students take the MSA. A small percentage of students take the Alt-MSA, an alternate test for students with severe disabilities.

What are the tests like?

Students take the tests for approximately 90 minutes each day. There are four days of testing -- two days for reading and two days for mathematics. The test includes multiple-choice questions and questions that require the student to write a short response. Information about the MSA, along with sample test questions, are available on the Web at www.marylandpublicschools.org.

Do individual students receive scores on the MSA?

Parents receive their child's scores from the local school system. The scores show how well the child learned the subject matter and how the child performed compared to other children nationally. The score report also shows how the school, school system, and state performed on the tests.

How are scores reported?

Scores are reported in terms of basic, proficient, and advanced performance. Basic is the lowest level of performance. Proficient is the middle level and Advanced is the highest level. The goal is to have all students perform at the Proficient or Advanced level.
